

First, H.R. 3087, a bill to require the President, in coordination with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other military leaders, to develop and transmit to Congress a comprehensive strategy for redeployment of United States Armed Forces in Iraq; and, second, a bill to amend the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to establish a procedure for authorizing certain electronic surveillance.

Mr. Speaker, it is particularly important at this juncture in my remarks that I make it very clear that we have heard a lot of talk from the other side of the aisle about the need to reform FISA. The Director of National Intelligence has identified a specific intelligence collection gap and spoken of "a backlog for things requiring a warrant," and I quote him. He claims that this is hindering our efforts to prevent terrorist attacks.

Congress, Mr. Speaker, takes its responsibilities to protect the Nation seriously. None of us on either side of the aisle want to leave our intelligence professionals short. The Intelligence Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Homeland Security Committee, and the leadership have been working around the clock to come up with a solution that addresses this particular problem. However, again and again, the administration has overplayed their hand. Each time we get close to an agreement, they ask for more, and I might add the negotiations on this have been going on for over a year.

First they said Congress needed to clarify that the government shouldn't need a warrant to collect foreign communications. There was never ever any disagreement about that.

Then they said they wanted broader authority to conduct electronic surveillance of terrorist communications. We agreed to that.

Then they said they wanted immunity for the telecommunications carriers. We agreed to give them prospective immunity and would consider retrospective immunity when we get back.

But we insist on a couple of things. We want to preserve the role of the FISA Court as an independent check on the government to prevent them from infringing on the rights of Americans, and we insist that this legislation have a sunset. In this rushed environment before recess, we should not make permanent changes to FISA.

Last night, the congressional leadership was willing to make further changes for Director McConnell. He said with those changes he would support the bill because it would "significantly enhance America's security." And I am quoting him again. But after this agreement was reached, congressional Republicans insisted on a much broader, permanent bill, giving the Attorney General, this Attorney General, not the Court, the discretion to make decisions about surveillance involving Americans. Clearly, in my judgment, they are not negotiating in good faith.

If they reject this bill, the other side is saying, in the face of a resurgent al Qaeda, they don't want to plug the collection gap identified by the Director of National Intelligence immediately. They are rejecting "significantly enhancing America's security."

Now, if the other side insists on manufacturing obstructionist delays and rejecting agreements that will enhance our security, we can stay here all August and September and December until we get this done. The security of this Nation deserves no less.

This rule is necessary, Mr. Speaker, because under clause 1(a), rule XV, the Speaker may entertain motions to suspend the rules only on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of each week. In order for suspensions to be considered on other days, as my colleagues well know, the Rules Committee must authorize consideration of these motions.

This is not an unusual procedure, as some on the other side may suggest. In fact, in the 109th Congress, alone, my friends on the other side of the aisle reported at least six rules that provided for additional suspension days.

This rule limits the suspension of rules to only these two bills and will help us move important legislation before we leave for the August recess. Time is, indeed, of the essence. Not because many in this body wish to go home this weekend but, rather, because of the gravity of these situations both here at home and abroad.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in support of this rule and the underlying piece of legislation.

I do wish to put my colleagues on notice that, following the conclusion of debate on this rule, I intend to offer an amendment to the rule. My amendment will permit the House to consider emergency legislation today appropriating \$250 million to begin the reconstruction of the I-35 bridge, which collapsed this week in Minnesota. We have properly given our condolences and continue those to those who have lost loved ones and those who are awaiting word regarding those who are still missing and those who have been injured. All of us grieve with all of them.

Without this amendment and this rule, this legislation will not be permitted to proceed; and these emergency funds would be delayed. Realize a vote against this rule and my amendment to the rule will be a vote against providing this emergency assistance to the people of Minnesota, specifically Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the gentleman from Florida yielding me time, and I do know that we are here today, among other things, to seek immediate resolution from the United States Congress to help the wonderful people of Minnesota in their time of grief by authorizing money that will be spent to immediately rebuild the bridge that collapsed over the Mississippi.

All Members of this body watched the horror the other night as we saw not only the collapse but also the heroism of men and women, first responders and others, as they joined in to help the people of Minneapolis-St. Paul as they struggled with this.

I would note that the committee action, regular order, has taken place to make sure that this bill would be before not only the Democrat majority but also we as Republicans participated in each of these activities.

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The gentleman stood up and talked about how great and wonderful and what normal and regular things happen around here, but these are not normal times.

Once again today, here we are on the floor of the House of Representatives almost as a new low, I would say, Mr. Speaker, being asked to debate a rule on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and we don't even have a copy of the bill. So I would like to ask the gentleman from Florida, can we please see a copy of the bill?

I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. This matter is under suspension. My friend on the Rules Committee and I were there when it passed out of the Rules Committee on suspension, and that requirement is met.

Mr. SESSIONS. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand this. This new Democrat majority that comes to town, talks about open and honesty, ethics above reproach, all the things that they would do differently than what the Republicans have done, and they have not lived up to that.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SESSIONS. I would yield to the gentleman if he will answer the question: Where is the copy of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that we're doing the rule on today that we're expected to vote on today?

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Thank you for yielding. It is in the hopper. The minority members of the Intelligence Committee have the measure.

Mr. SESSIONS. Reclaiming my time, I would yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for yielding, and I see we're joined here by a very distinguished member of the House Committee on Intelligence. I think we have been, for literally months, trying to make in order the legislation that has been introduced by our friend from Albuquerque (Mrs. WILSON), and we believe that that, in fact, is the answer to this problem.

The President of the United States, in the news conference that he held with Mike McConnell about an hour ago, made it crystal clear that he is going to ask the Director one question: If he gets legislation that emerges from this body, will it, in fact, enhance our ability to make sure that foreigners on